AN ESSAY ON WOMAN, IN THREE EPISTLES.

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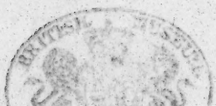

AN ESSAY on WOMAN.

EPISTLE I.

AWAKE! my C-------, leave all things beſide,
To low ambition, and to Scottiſh pride:
Let us (ſince life can little more ſupply,
Than, juſt to fight a duel---- and to die)
Expatiate, freely, upon Woman-kind;
And trace, the mighty errors of her mind;
Mark where her thouſand weeds, promiſcuous, ſhoot;
And, fearleſs, cultivate forbidden fruit:
Together, let us trace this ample field;
Try, what the open, what the covert yield;

The artful tricks, and pretty flights explore,
Of ev'ry coy, and every willing whore:
Eye, all her walks; shoot folly, as it flies;
Notice her actions, as to sight they rise:
Blame, where we must; but laugh, where e'er we can;
And shew, that Woman is the Foe of Man.

Of God above, or Woman here low,
What can we reason, but from what we know?
Of her, what see we but her station here,
From which to reason, or to which refer?
Through worlds unnumber'd though the God be known,
Woman's acknowledg'd only in our own.

Woman, presumptuous! would the reason find,
Why she is form'd so little, and so blind?
But let her first the harder reason guess,
Why she is form'd no blinder, and no less?

Ask of her mother, Earth, why oaks are made
Taller, or stronger, than the weeds they shade?
Woman respecting, what most wrong we call,
May, must be right, as relative to all.

That woman's helpleſs, ſay not ---- heaven in fault;
Say rather ---- ſhe's as perfect as ſhe ought:
Her knowledge, meaſured to her ſtate and place;
Her time, a moment; and a point, her ſpace.
Heav'n from us all conceals the book of fate,
Or who would wed the woman he muſt hate?
The girl thy paſſion dooms a lawful prey,
Had ſhe thy reaſon, would ſhe ſing, and play?
Pleas'd to the laſt, ſhe yields her virgin charms,
And hugs the dear deſtroyer in her arms.
Oh! blindneſs to the future, not to ſee
Her two worſt enemies are, love and thee;
From whom to endleſs ruin ſhe is ſent,
Her fatal paſſion is her puniſhment,
Hope ſprings eternal in the female breaſt,
Women ne'er are, but always to be bleſt:
The girls uneaſy and confin'd, will run
From dear mamma to us, to be undone.
Lo! the poor Indian, whoſe untutor'd mind,
With European taſte all unrefin'd,

Who never ſaw or maſquerade or play,
Nor ſhone at court on George's natal day;
Yet ſimple nature to her hope has given,
In her dear tawny Lord, an humbler heav'n:
To be, contents her natural deſire,
She asks no angel's wing, no ſeraph's fire;
But thinks, ſhe has all bleſſings in her eye,
Her dusky lover in her company.

Go! wiſer thou, and in thy nervous lines,
Where all the ſtrength of compoſition ſhines,
Call imperfections to the face of day,
And d---- the needy players who work for pay:
Say, here they rant, and there too much they whine;
Heed not their fears, thy buſineſs is --- to dine.

Ask, for what end the ſparkling brilliants ſhine?
The woman --- ever modeſt --- cries, for mine;
For me the artiſt tries his utmoſt power,
And forms, from gems, the artificial flower;
Annual, for me, returning winter comes;
For me, prepares ridottos, masks, and drums;

For me, joy guſhes from a thouſand ſprings;
And forty-ſhilling actors ſoar to Kings;
Chairmen to waft me, boys to light me riſe,
And all the pit is wounded by my eyes.
But errs not nature from her kind intent,
When female minds, on miſchief ever bent,
Delight to torture where they ought to pleaſe,
And yield their own to blaſt another's eaſe?
" No, ('tis reply'd) the females have no flaws,
" And, to a woman, act by gen'ral laws;
" Without exception do what ills they can;
" Their only aim to hurt, to injure man,"
If the great end be human happineſs,
And woman deviates ---- ſhall man do leſs?
As much that end a conſtant courſe requires,
Of ſhowers and ſun-ſhine, as of their deſires;
As much eternal ſprings and cloudleſs skies,
As woman, ever temperate, calm, and wiſe.
If plagues and earthquakes heav'ns deſign fulfil,
Why ſhould not man o'er woman have his will?

Better for us, perhaps, it might appear,
Were you a mitre'd prieſt, and I a peer;
But truſt me, C-----, thoſe, who better know,
Have long determin'd it ſhall not be ſo.
Thus all ſubſiſts by politics and ſtrife,
And paſſions are the elements of life.
The gen'ral order, ſince the whole began,
Is not in woman, but is kept in man.
What wou'd theſe girls? now upwards will they ſoar,
And little leſs than angels, would be more;
Now look around, and juſt as griev'd appear,
They are not mothers in their fifteenth year:
Made for their uſe, all creatures will they call;
Say, what their uſe, had they the powers of all?
Kind to the ſex, in rich profuſion kind,
Shape, beauty, wit, dame Nature has aſſign'd;
Shall ſhe then only, whom a wit we call,
Be pleas'd with nothing, if not bleſs'd with all?
A woman's bliſs, could pride that bleſſing find,
Is, not to think or act beyond her kind.

No powers of body or of ſoul to ſhare,
But what her nature and her ſtate can bear,
Why have not women microſcopic eyes?
For this plain reaſon --- women are not flies.
Say, what their uſe, were finer optics giv'n,
To inſpect a mite, not comprehend a heav'n?
Ceaſe then, nor rudely let us ſeem to blame;
Our proper bliſs is centred in the dame:
Let us ſubmit, in this our humble ſphere,
Content to be as bleſt as we can bear:
Safe in the hands of one all-charming wife,
Calm let us tread the rugged path of life;
And, ſpite of truth, in fair conviction's ſpite,
Still let us ſay, and ſwear, that WOMAN'S RIGHT.

EPISTLE II.

KNOW then thyſelf --- and make the Sex thy care,
The proper ſtudy of Mankind's the FAIR:
Plac'd in that ſtate — which all who know thee, know
A Politician, Poet, Parſon, Beau;
Created half to riſe, and half to fall,
Great ſon of Homer — doating on a doll;
Truth's friend ſo fond of female falſhood grown,
The glory, jeſt, and riddle of the town.
Go, wond'rous creature, as Apollo leads,
And mark the Path majeſtic Milton treads;
The little verſifiers teach to write,
Then to thy bottle and thy w---- at night.
The wond'ring actors, when of late they ſaw
A grave Divine explain theatric law,
Admir'd the wiſdom of the rev'rend cowl,
And ſhew'd a C------, as we ſhew an owl.

Has he who wrote the Roſciad e'er inclin'd
Ten days together to one female mind?
Then might thy friend be conſtant to his W----,
And PRIVILEGE be pleaded then no more.
Woman to man ſtill yields (and where's the harm?)
Who keeps her cloſe while ſhe has power to charm;
Then yields her to his fellow-brutes a prey:
And where's the fault, my friend, in us, or they?
Two principles in human nature reign,
Self-love to urge, and reaſon to reſtrain:
Self love, the ſpring of motion, acts the ſoul;
And reaſon yields to its ſupreme controul:
Great ſtrength the moving principal requires,
Active its task, it prompts, impels, inſpires;
Sedate and quiet ſenſe and reaſon lie;
We yield to paſſion, and from reaſon fly.
We ſieze immediate good by preſent ſenſe,
And leave to fate and chance the conſequence:
Thicker than arguments temptations throng,
More pow'rful theſe, though thoſe are ne'er ſo ſtrong.

Self-love and reaſon to one end aſpire,
Pain our averſion, *pleaſure* our deſire;
But greedy ſtill our object to devour,
We crop, without remorſe, the faireſt flow'r:
Pleaſure, with us, is always underſtood,
Howe'er obtain'd, our beſt and greateſt good.

Paſſions, like elements, though born to fight,
By female pow'r ſubdu'd, are alter'd quite;
Theſe 'tis enough to temper and employ,
While what affords moſt pleaſure, can deſtroy.

All ſpread their charms, but charm not all alike,
On different ſenſes different objects ſtrike;
Hence different ladies, more or leſs inflame;
Or different pow'rs ſometimes attend the *ſame*;
And calling up each paſſion of the breaſt,
Each lady, in her turn, ſubdues the reſt.

As man, perhaps, the moment of his breath,
Imbibes the flame which ends not but with death;
The flame, that muſt ſubdue the fair at length,
Grows with his growth, and ſtrengthens with his ſtrength.

So caſt and mingled too in *Woman*'s frame,
Her mind's diſeaſe, her *ruling paſſion* came.
Imagination plies her dangerous art,
And pours it all upon the peccant part:
Nature it's mother, habit is it's nurſe,
Wit, ſpirit, faculties, but make it worſe.
We wretched ſubjects to the female ſway,
The tyrant, Woman, one and all, obey;
Who, bent to govern by her own wiſe rules,
Will, if ſhe finds not, aim to make us fools;
Teach us to mourn our ſtate, but not to mend;
A ſharp accuſer, but a helpleſs friend!
Proud of her eaſy conqueſt all along,
She ſtill allays our paſſions, weak or ſtrong.
Virtuous and vicious every man muſt be;
Women are neither in a ſmall degree;
The rogue and fool, by fits, is fair and wiſe,
Women are always what they moſt deſpiſe:
'Tis but by parts *Man* follows good or ill;
Woman's ſole ſovereign is *her own dear will*,

While ev'ry man purſues a different goal,
Woman's whole aim's unlimited controul,
The faults of men, and their defects of mind,
Afford the higheſt joy to womankind.

See ſome peculiar whim each man attend;
See every Woman lab'ring to one end:
See ſome fit paſſion ev'ry man employ;
Empire alone affords the Woman joy.
Behold the *Girl*, by Nature's kindly law,
Pleas'd with a rattle, tickled with a ſtraw;
Some other bauble gives her youth delight,
A little louder, but as empty quite.
Dreſs, dancing, balls, amuſe her riper age,
And drams and opiates are the toys of age;
Pleas'd with this bauble ſtill, as that before,
'Till tir'd, ſhe ſleeps --- and *life's poor play is o'er.*

EPISTLE III.

OH Happineſs! to which we all aſpire,
Wing'd with ſtrong hope, and borne by full deſire,
Oh Eaſe! for which in want, in wealth we ſigh,
That Eaſe for which we labour and we die.
Why ſhould the *Female* ever have the power,
To tyrannize o'er Man, and to devour?
Why ſhould the wiſe, the learned, and the fool,
The brave, the rich ---- ſubmit to Woman's rule?
Ask of the learn'd the cauſe, the learn'd are blind,
This bids us ſeek, that ſhun all Womankind;
Some place the bliſs in ſerving *one* alone,
Some by a *ſingle Paſſion* are undone.
Some, ſunk to beaſts, find pleaſure end in pain,
Some, ſwell'd to Gods, --- confeſs all pleaſure vain;
Some hold the maxim others wrong would call,
To try all Women --- and to doubt them all.

Oh, Sons of Men! attempt no more to riſe
But own the wond'rous force of Woman's eyes;
Who, big with laughter, your vain toil ſurveys,
And ſhews her power a thouſand diff'rent ways.
Know all the happineſs we hope to find,
Depends upon the will of Womankind.

Nothing ſo true as *Pope*, long ſince, let fall,
" Moſt Women have no characters at all;"
How many pictures of one nymph we view!
All how unlike each other!--- all how true!
See Sin in ſtate majeſtically drunk,
Proud as a Peereſs, prouder as a punk;
Chaſte to her husband, frank to all beſide,
A teeming miſtreſs, but a barren bride;
In whoſe mad brain the mix'd ideas roll,
Of *Tallboy*'s breeches, and of *Cæſar*'s ſoul.
Who, ſpite of delicacy, ſtoops at once,
And makes her hearty meal upon a dunce.

In Men we various ruling paſſions find,
In Women --- two alone divide the mind;
Thoſe only fixed, they, firſt or laſt, obey,
The love of pleaſure, and the love of ſway.

FINIS.